

REPORT
OF THE
SELECT COMMITTEE

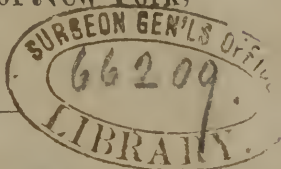
TO WHOM WAS REFERRED THE

PETITION OF JOHN THOMSON,

TO THE

Legislature of the State of New York,

IN 1825.



In presenting to the public the Report of a select committee on the Thomsonian practice of physic, to the legislature of the State of New-York, I disavow any disposition, had I the qualification necessary to such a task, to build up a new system of medical practice, however excellent I may believe it to be, by endeavouring to bring into unmerited disrepute the present prevailing practice as "by Law established." My present object in publishing this report, together with several letters on the same subject, which as they contain some of the views of men entitled to consideration, I have thought fit to append thereto, is to elicit a fair and candid investigation of the principles upon which the Thomsonian system of medical practice is founded. This system it is believed depends more for

its complete success, upon an impartial and close examination, than upon any puffing it will be likely soon to get. The facts connected with this system of practice too, are so striking, that none but interested or wilfully prejudiced minds can well disregard them. This system, simple as all systems intended for the benefit of mankind generally, ought to be, and easy of access, as well as speedy in its beneficial effects, with the numerous cures constantly effecting by it, must furnish collateral evidences of its extensive excellency, that not even the system which is "by law established" and by its unnatural penalties protected, will be able to suppress.

For a useful knowledge of this system of medical practice, the public are referred to Ward Sears, agent for the patentee, No. 22½ South Calvert Street Baltimore.

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1825

REPORT

OF THE

SELECT COMMITTEE

ON THE

THOMSONIAN PRACTICE OF PHYSIC.

MR. EDGERTON, from the select committee to whom was referred the petition of *John Thomson* and others, praying for the repeal of so much of the law regulating the practice of Physic and Surgery, as prohibits the practice of Botanic Physicians,

RESPECTFULLY REPORT:

Your committee have given the subject referred to them, an examination; and have found no little embarrassment in the course of their investigations. The fact, that at a period at no less distance than the last December, our present medical law was revised, amended and adopted, and that

too, concurred in by two at least of the present committee, bids them be cautious in again so soon altering the law, without having seen its effects or operation. It is due however, to the house, to state, that your committee are not unanimous in the conclusions to which they may have come upon this subject.

The petitioner represents that he is in the possession of a patent right for curing diseases. The original proprietor of this patent, it appears, was one Samuel Thomson, a native or inhabitant of Massachusetts, who acquired a very high reputation, and was considered a very laborious inquirer into the vegetable kingdom; and from what is before your committee, must have been a man of great perseverance, and much originality of thought, and great variety of practice. The present applicant, John Thomson, his son and successor, claims the right, under and by virtue of this patent, to practice what he terms Botanic Medicine, and to sell family rights to use his medicines, as they are compounded by him.

As to the propriety and expediency of granting the patent originally, and as to the validity of the patent, it is not the object of your committee to express an opinion at the present time. It does appear, however, that the patentee underwent an examination by Dr. Thornton, of the Patent Office at Washington; and his patent was made out in due form, while Mr. Adams was Secretary of State.

A great number of petitions (from at least one half of the counties in this State) have also been referred to your committee, upon this subject: several thousands of names are subscribed to these petitions, praying for the repeal of the law in question. Many individuals have also appeared before your committee, who have used the medicines prepared by Thomson, and who have family rights; and who, if their testimony is at all to be credited, have received very signal benefits from Thomson's practice. By a number of the respectable and intelligent citizens of this city, has Thomson's practice been approbated; and the use of his medicines shown to be equal to that of any ever before known.

As to the nature and properties of the medicine used by Thomson, it has been altogether impossible to arrive at any definite opinion. As to the whole, it however appears, that one material and essential plant enters largely into his system of practice, and is much used by him and others, as a medicine. The Lobelia, of which botanical writers give us eight different kinds; and that which Thomson uses, appears to be the Lobelia inflata, or in plain English, wild tobacco. It is described by botanists as a very powerful emetic and expectorant. From those who for years have made free use of this plant, they describe it as a very useful and harmless medicine; that they have taken it in considerable quantities, with perfect safety and the best effects, as an emetic and family medicine.

Your committee have no disposition to inquire into the *extent* of Thomson's botanical knowledge, or that of those who use his medicines; being aware that this would lead to an inquiry neither useful to the house, and perhaps not very creditable to the parties interested. Your committee are, however, satisfied that the individuals who have appeared before them, have full confidence in this system of practice, and the safety and utility of the medicines which are prepared from the Lobelia inflata, both in its simple state, and as compounded with other vegetable substances.

The petitions complain, that by the existing law, they are compelled to employ licensed physicians, in whose medicines they have no confidence, and which they cannot use with safety to cure their diseases. They allege that they, as free citizens, have a right to employ such physicians as they choose, without being controlled in their choice; but that by employing those of their choice, they are subjected to a fine and imprisonment, if they so practice. The statute subjects those who are not licensed by a county medical society, or by a college having the power to confer degrees in medicine, to a fine, and also to imprisonment at the discretion of the court, who, for a fee or reward, shall practice medicine.

Another class of persons, who do not come within the number of those denominated Botanic Physicians, have also presented their petitions, and they have been referred

to your committee. They pray for the repeal of the law in question, and allege that their knowledge of medicine extends to the cure of single diseases in several cases; and by great numbers of petitioners, their merits, skill and usefulness, are fully confirmed.

In the opinion of your committee, and from their own knowledge of facts, there are to be found some very useful citizens, who have acquired superior skill in curing particular diseases. Whether their skill and usefulness are the result of accident or research, and whether they have become such by labor and experience, is not material to the question, as to the repeal or continuance of the law now in existence. Your committee, however, do not readily see the justice or expediency of the law restraining them from a free use of their skill, in providing for themselves a livelihood and a subsistence. For a law to say to any individual, that you shall not use the simple remedies which the God of Nature has so profusely scattered around him, to heal disease, is to require him to surrender the right to pursue happiness in the path in which she alone may possibly be found. If, then, a law which would lay such a prohibition upon an individual, in using means to promote his own happiness, or if you please, to cure his own diseases, and that of his family and friends, would be absurd and oppressive, it would seem that he has the same right to use it for the benefit of others. But it may be said, that to all this there can be no objection, if there is no fee or reward taken or received for the services rendered. The taking the fee or reward, then, is the offence, and not the injury done to those who are so unfortunate as to fall into the hands of quacks, steam doctors, root doctors, or empirics.

The public health, and the lives of individuals, are of too great moment to be trifled away, or committed to unskilful, ignorant, and conceited practitioners of physic. Experience and facts will confirm the truth, that the world has suffered little less from learned impositions and quackery upon all subjects, than from ignorance. The rapid progress in medical science, and the many valuable improvements and discoveries made in the auxiliary branches

connected with that profession, are a sure and certain indication of the enlightened spirit of the age. To arrest these improvements, and to check these advances in knowledge, would be unwise and improper. But if, to promote these valuable ends, the liberty of the citizen in the free exercise of his faculties is to be abridged, and his rights to be useful are to be evaded, there can be no choice in the alteration.

That the present medical law upon our statute book, is calculated to work serious evils, and is an abridgment of the rights of individuals, your committee do not doubt. No class of our community would be more strictly a privileged order, than our licensed physicians, if the present law remains. But that those who have qualified themselves for usefulness, by superior industry and learning, ought to be protected, cannot be questioned. The law upon this subject, as it heretofore stood, and under which the medical profession steadily advanced in respectability and usefulness, your committee believe was salutary; and a majority of your committee, therefore, beg leave to recommend the repeal of the first, second and twenty-second sections of title sixth of chapter fourteenth of the revised statutes, and have directed their chairman to introduce a bill accordingly.

To the Honorable

the Legislature of the State of New-York:

THE subscriber begs leave to submit for the consideration of your honorable body the private opinion of the Committee* which was appointed by the Assembly of the State of New-York, in the winter session of 1828, to investigate the Thomsonian System of Practice; and being the only practitioner in this vicinity, he had not only the honor of bringing a large number of individuals before said Committee, whom he had attended, but also of having the attendance of Judge Dimmick, one of the Com-

* For the Report of the said Committee, see Assembly Journal, from p. 762 to 764

mittee, part of three days, to examine many personally, at their dwellings in this city, who did not come before said Committee,—a small part of which testimony is also respectfully submitted.

JOHN THOMSON,
Albany, January, 1829. 57 Beaver Street.

We pretend to no knowledge of this much talked of system of medicine. The opinions of Messrs. Dimmick, Edgerton, and Metcalf, are very favourable, and the high respectability of their characters entitles them to an attentive perusal.—*Daily Advertiser.*

Albany, April, 20th, 1828.

DOCT. JOHN THOMSON,

Sir—In answer to your request as to my opinion upon the merits of your system of practice, I cheerfully say, that I believe it will eventually take the preference of all other systems of medical practice. My prejudices, habits, and education, all were opposed to your system; but after the careful and laborious examination I have given it, I am satisfied that you will succeed, and in the judgment of the candid and liberal part of the community, share their protection and confidence. I hope you may continue to do well, persevere in your efforts to benefit the human family, and to add to the stock of *practical* knowledge, that the rewards of honest industry may await you.

I am respectfully yours,

BELA EDGERTON,
Member of Assembly, and Chairman.

Albany, April, 19th, 1828.

Sir—In compliance with your request, and with a wish to do justice to the public in relation to the effects of what is called the "Thomsonian system of practice" on the community, I feel myself justified in saying, that having been one of a committee of five, appointed by the Assembly of the state of New-York, to inquire into and report to that house on that subject, I have made particular examination so far as I could find time and opportunity,

during three or four weeks in the city of Albany. But my enquiries have not only extended to the examination of various individuals, from different parts of this state where that system is in use, but have also examined about twenty-five families, or the heads thereof, in the city of Albany, where considerable use seems to have been made of that method of curing diseases. I am sensible, that from education, from habits of thinking, and from my intimate connexion with regular physicians, I approached that examination with strong prejudices against every species of *quackery* and *empiricism*. But of *this species of quackery*, I had no knowledge before. I first read Dr. Thomson's certificates of great cures, with all that indifference which men generally do when they expect imposition or deception is about to be played off upon them. On examination however, of all or nearly all the cases certified, as having taken place in the city of Albany within a few months, in the latter part of the year 1824, and the fore part of the year 1825, I found them fully supported by statements made by the respective families, or heads thereof. I also found many *particulars* of those cases stated, which in my opinion, adds much to the importance and striking features of them, which do not appear in the short statements made of them in these certificates. I also endeavoured to find out, if possible, by inquiry of various individuals, as well of the enemies of the system as the friends, and those who were indifferent on the subject, what cases, if any existed of injurious effects arising from its use; and although I found some three or four, in which dark surmises and suspicions seemed to have been set afloat in the community, in every case which I was able to trace, I did trace, by examination of the friends of the persons, thus supposed to have been injured by or fallen victims to such practice; and could find no reason to believe or suspect that any injury had been done to the patient, but more or less relief thereby gained. It is also due to Dr. Thomson to say, that in every case wherein suspicions have been indulged, it appeared the patient had been pronounced by the regular physicians, incurable; and that such opinion had been given in nearly all the cases, amounting to some forty or

fifty, of which I heard detailed the particulars; and in some of which, to use the language attributed to the regular physicians, "it was as impossible to restore them to health as it was to create a new world." After such an examination, and maturely reflecting thereon, I think it neither rash nor indiscreet to say, that judging from the effects of his practice in the city of Albany, however much regular physicians may, as I am sure they will, carp at the expression, and speaking after the manner of men, or if you please, according to human reasoning, it has snatched ten from the grave, where it has hastened one to it.

What may be its *particular* effects in other parts of the state, or when not administered by Dr. Thomson himself, I am unable to state. The persons thus examined appeared respectable, intelligent, and candid, and generally expressed their great opposition to, and want of confidence in Dr. Thomson's practice, before they had tried it, and were induced to make the trial in consequence of the *desperate* nature of their cases, and with a belief or hope that no injury could be done thereby. With your theory or principles, I had little to do; the *effects* of your practice was the principle thing sought for by me, as by your fruits, I was resolved to judge you, and however much may be the obloquy which the declaration of a favourable opinion of your practice may call forth from the learned, not only against *quacks*, but the *supporters* of quacks, I freely take upon myself the responsibility of subscribing to the above.

Your obedient servant,

A. DIMMICK,

Member of Assembly.

P. S. Most of the individuals thus examined, had family rights, upon which they placed a very high value; and one gentleman, whose respectability and candour are very high in public estimation, declared he would not be deprived of the knowledge for 1000 dollars. I also examined two gentlemen from Nantucket, who spoke most distinctly of the respectability and credibility of the persons whose signatures appear attached to Dr. T's. certificates, of his practice in that place.

A. D.

Copy of a letter from the celebrated Dr. Waterhouse, formerly Lecturer on Materia Medica in Cambridge University, to Samuel L. Mitchell, M. D. & L. L. D.

Cambridge, Dec'r. 19th, 1825.

My Dear Sir—Mr. alias Dr. Samuel Thomson, who has the honor of introducing the valuable *Lobelia* to use, and fully proved its efficacy and safety, will deliver you this. He has cured and relieved many of disorders, which others could not, without being a regular deplomatized physician, and dared to be a republican in a hot bed of federalism; for which he has been shamefully ill-treated, even to persecution.

I have aided and assisted Thomson from a firm belief that his novel practice has been beneficial to numbers, and that it may be placed among improvements. If he be a quack, he is a quack *suigeneris*, for he proclaims his mode and means. Had John Hunter, whom I well knew, been born and bred where Samuel Thomson was, he would have been just such another man; and had S. T. been thrown into the same society and associations as J. H. he would, in my opinion, been his equal, with probably a wider range of thought; but both men of talents, and originality of thought.

I am, indeed, so disgusted with learned quackery, that I take some interest in honest, humane and strong-minded empiricism; for it has done more for our art, in all ages and in all countries, than all the universities since the times of Charlemain. Where, for goodness sake, did Hippocrates study?—air, earth, and water—man, and his kindred vegetables—disease and death, and all casualties and concomitants of humanity, were the pages he studied—every thing that surrounds and nourishes us, were the objects of his attention and study. In a word, he read diligently and sagaciously, the *Great Book of Nature*, instead of the little books of man, as Thomson has.

How came your Legislature to pass so unconstitutional an act as that called the *antiquack* law?—such as the Parliament of England would hardly have ventured on?—for *who will define quackery?*—Were I sufficiently acquainted with your excellent Governor Clinton, I would write to

him on the subject. You New-Yorkers are half a century behind us in *theological science*, but your quack bill looks as if you halted also in physic.

But what I have seen and learnt of Mr. Thomson, I wish him success, and the notice of the eminent and the liberal in the profession, and with this view I give him this rapidly-written letter to Dr. Mitchell, and am with a high degree of esteem and respect his

Steady friend,
BEN^J. WATERHOUSE.

To Dr. John Thomson.

New-York, 18th, Dec. 1824.

SIR—I remember very well that about the 5th November you called upon me, in company with Dr. Everett, and presented me a copy of your father's "*New Guide to Health*," with a narrative of his life and discoveries.

I consider biography as one of the most entertaining and instructive branches of history; and that of Dr. Samuel Thomson especially worthy of being read by medical men. I congratulate him on his escape from the trials and difficulties in which he has been involved, and on retaining the animated front and features, exhibited in Mr. Williams' portrait of him. I hope that he may long continue to enjoy the rewards of good service, the *quantum meruit*, and the *mens sibi conscia recti*.

The Flora of North America is astonishingly rich in remedies. There is no doubt in my mind, that in more diseases than is generally acknowledged, vegetable simples are the preferable remedies. Who knows, but in time, these native productions of the field and forest, will so enlarge and confirm their dominion, as to supercede the employment of other medicines.

Be kind enough to accept the assurance of my esteem and regard; and when you write to Dr. W. Ingalls, to present him my compliments.

SAMUEL L. MITCHILL.

To Dr. John Thomson.

New-York, Dec. 8th, 1825.

Sir—The object, as I understand, which you had in view, when you submitted to me this afternoon, sixteen written certificates and three printed ones, in favour of your father's skill and practice, was to obtain my favourable opinion, with a testimonial of the same.

It was very agreeable to learn, that among other diseases, *consumption, croup, nervous headache, dyspepsia, fever, injury of the back, gravel, dropsy, delicate health, liver complaint and rheumatism*, had been removed by the prescriptions of Samuel Thomson. Not having witnessed the symptoms, nor attended to the operation of the medicines in any of the cases, I can only judge of them from the several statements made. If it is intended to make known, to the citizens at large, the doctor's success and eminence, I should think the best method would be to distribute them extensively in a pamphlet, as has been done by others in similar circumstances. The people will then be enabled to judge for themselves.

On the controverted points among professional men and others, concerning quackery, mal-practice, and priority of discovery, I do not conceive it needful for me to give a judgment. The great matter is to alleviate human suffering; and in this I wish the author of the treatment by *Lobelia and Capsicum*, may continue to be serviceable.

With the return of the papers you left with me, I beg you to accept my cordial salutation.

SAMUEL L. MITCHILL.

Extracts of Letters from Dr. David Morrill, of Union Village, (Ohio,) to Dr. Thomson.

[His competency to form correct views of the subject, will appear by his own statement; and his opinions are so well expressed, that they were thought worth preserving.]

“As I desire to form some acquaintance with you, it will be proper in the first place to give some information in relation to myself. I moved to this state about thirty-four years ago, from the state of New Jersey, the place

of my nativity. I am now nearly sixty years of age. In the early part of my life, I practised physic, having been regularly educated in that profession while young.

"For the last twenty years I have been engaged principally in horticulture, having given up the practice under a conviction of the impropriety of administering poison instead of medicine. I have lately become acquainted with one of your agents, and from him I have purchased a right to practice under your patent. The principles which you have laid down in your pamphlet, appear to me to be the most rational and consistent thing, which has ever reached my knowledge, in relation to the healing art. I have an ardent desire to be as useful as possible to my fellow men, and therefore I earnestly solicit your aid and teaching.

"Any information which you might think proper to communicate, would confer a lasting obligation on me, and might in the issue, be a real benefit and lasting blessing to this western world.

"It would be a satisfaction to know how the work is prospering in the East, and what prospect there is of defeating this limb of Anti-Christ.

"In the west we are doing our best to defeat the beast, and in this quarter there are already some hundreds who have wholly rejected the use of poisonous medicines.

"I am now about 60 years of age, and it is too late in the day for me to commence any great career of practice; but having examined the principle upon which your system is founded, with care and attention, and being confident of its utility, my principal object is to give the thing a solid root among a little circle of my particular friends, that its usefulness in time to come, may be more fully known. I have the most certain evidence to believe that the time is *coming* and now *is* when God will utterly supplant, root out, and destroy from the face of the earth, all doctor craft: and I firmly believe the new system of vegetable medicine (notwithstanding the opposition it meets with at present from the advocates for poison) will yet prove a battle-axe, that will hew down the tall cedars of America, and extend its influence across the Atlantic to the old world, and bear down all opposition, till the whole

craft is annihilated. I have found a little narrow track, that I feel well satisfied with; which is to be an honest man, and do those things, and those only, that my conscience justifies me in. I find daily peace in my present manner of going, and shall never change it for any human invented system on earth."

DAVID MORRILL.

Boston, April 2d, 1825.

This certifies, that the preparing and compounding the medicine in manner described in the patent, and administering them to cure diseases, which Dr. Thomson claims as his own invention, I believe to be new and useful.

WILLIAM INGALLS, *M. D.*

A man in this city, from some cause unknown, took a large dose of poison, at the time it was supposed to have been opium. A regular physician was sent for, who commenced by bleeding, which by suspending animation, had no other effect, than that of hastening him into violent spasms. He became perfectly insensible, his jaws being set and the muscular parts of his system much contracted; and it was generally thought by those who saw him, that he could not live but a short time, when his wife sent for Dr. Thomson, who came and administered his medicine. In about fifteen minutes he spoke, and in four hours was perfectly clear of the poison. But instead of opium, as was supposed, confessed he had taken a teaspoonful of arsenic [ratsbane.]

If necessary, abundant evidence of the truth of the above statement can be produced.

A SPECTATOR.

128 State-street.

Albany 31st. Oct. 1825.

DR. THOMSON,

Sir—Having a desire to be as instrumental as possible in relieving my fellow sufferers, in time of distress, I send you this my certificate, which you may make public if you think proper, showing that you was the means, with the

assistance of a kind Providence, in relieving me, who but a short time since was lying on a bed of sickness.

For a number of years past I had been in very delicate health, in so much that I scarcely knew what it was to enjoy a well day. My case growing worse daily, I called several of our physicians, who attended on me punctually, but to no purpose. I was reduced to such a state that I could not be raised in any way to receive nourishment without fainting. I gave up all hopes of ever recovering—this was likewise the opinion of my attendants. At this critical juncture I was called on by a friend who persuaded me to try Dr. Thomson, who, he said, had done a great deal of good in this city, in restoring many persons to health who were in as bad a situation as I was, if not worse. Willing to try every effort, though with little hope, I sent for him. When he came he expressed an opinion that I was dying, or very near death. I asked him if he thought he could afford me any relief; he answered me, that he would make a trial, if I would dismiss the physicians who then attended me. I did so. He commenced with his practice, and in the course of twenty-four hours, I was, to my great surprise and the surprise of those who attended me, much better than I had been for four weeks previous.—He attended me very punctually for six days; and my old complaint, which had hung on me for several years, was entirely removed: after this he administered to me medicine to remove the pains in my breast, which had so good an effect as perfectly to relieve me. Several of my acquaintances have been relieved in the same extraordinary manner through the means of those medicines, after the failure of apothecary remedies. The value I place upon such practice can be more easily imagined than described.

ELIZABETH REYNOLDS,
No. 17 Van Schaick-street.

ALBANY Oct. 28, 1825.

This may certify that I have been afflicted with ulcers in my left side, dyspepsia and dropsy, and a complication of distressing complaints too numerous to mention.

Four years I had gradually declined, often seeking relief from medical assistance, and as often obliged to hear the painful reiteration that my diseases were incurable. At length my whole system became so disorganized that I could neither eat, drink, sleep, nor enjoy in any degree the comforts of this life.—Having, therefore, given up all hopes of recovery, and daily expecting to bid adieu to all that earth holds dear, Dr. John Thomson came to this city, and having had some previous knowledge of his botanical profession, to him I made speedy application, hoping that he might produce something that would give a temporary relief. Accordingly, on the 10th day of October, 1824, he commenced his attendance, and in the short space of ten days I was reduced, in size, ten inches, could lie down on my left side and rest quietly, which I had not been able to do in two years before. I have continued to improve in health ever since, so far that I enjoy my food and repose in a very good degree; believing the dropsy to be totally eradicated, dyspepsia cured, the ulcers healed, and the cause principally removed. It is true that I am not as strong, and cannot endure fatigue or hardship as well as I could before I was sick, but whenever I take cold, or from any other cause begin to feel any pain or disquietude in my side or stomach, the medicine which I have heretofore made use of is sure to prove efficacious. I therefore feel a disposition to recommend Dr. Thomson's medicine and practice to all, believing it, from my own experience, to be good, and salutary in removing all kinds of diseases with which the human family is afflicted.

SARAH SCOVEL,

No. 126 State-street.

The above statement in regard to my wife's case, is correct.

JONAH SCOVEL, Jun.

Albany, Nov. 25, 1825.

This may certify that my daughter was taken sick in Oct. 1824, with the billious fever. We employed two of the first physicians in this city, but she continued to grow worse, in so much, that in February following, she appeared to have a confirmed consumption, which symptoms

were attended with a severe pain in her side and a violent cough, which had reduced her to a mere skeleton. In this critical situation, I sent for Dr. Thomson, when she began to mend in 48 hours after his attendance. Her cough and pain in the side left her, and now she enjoys good health, which was far beyond our expectation at that time. We think that Dr. Thomson's medicine is the best we have applied to our daughter for a consumption, which it was undoubtedly believed she had.

JOSEPH PIERCE,
IRENE PIERCE.

Patroon-street.

Albany, Oct. 27, 1825.

Experience has taught me that Dr. Thomson's system of practice is superior to all other remedies which I have applied to cure a consumption, which complaint, three regular physicians in Quebec pronounced me to have, and said that they knew of no remedy for me, excepting the West India climate. Having a very bad cough and failing very fast, I was confident, without immediate assistance, I could not live long: and accordingly I set out for the south, and when I arrived in Albany, was recommended to try Dr. Thomson, who relieved me immediately, so that I was able to work at my trade, which I had not been able to do before he saw me for six months. I have found his medicine to have no other than a beneficial effect both upon myself and many of my acquaintances.

JOHN GOLDER,
83 Washington-street.

Extract of a certificate from Eastham, county of Barnstable, Mass. containing an account of Dr. Thomson's medicine.

In February 1816, the spotted fever first appeared in the town; eight persons, heads of families, within one mile of each other, died in about thirty-six hours. In three houses, within one fourth of a mile, ten persons died. In one house was a mother and four children. Six physicians in this county attended, but to little or no pur-

pose. Upwards of forty had died by the first of May, and but few lived who had the fever. In this month Dr. Thomson was called on for assistance. He sold the right of using his medicine to several individuals of the town, and gave them liberty to administer the same to the sick. In the course of the month, the men who used the medicine, relieved upwards of thirty who were seized with this violent disease, with the loss of but one.

At the same time and place, those who were attended by the regular physicians, eleven out of twelve died.

The above is authenticated by the names of the following persons:

PHILANDER SHAW, *Minister of Eastham.*
 OBED KNOWLES, *one of the Selectmen.*
 SAMUEL FREEMAN, *Do.*
 HARDING KNOWLES, *Justice of the Peace.*

Certificate of the Postmaster at Eastham.

I do hereby certify that the above statement of mortality in this town, and the success of Dr. Thomson's Medicine, was taken from a journal kept in my house, and is correct.

JOSEPH MAYO,

Agent for the Society, and Post Master.

ALBANY, October 25, 1825.

This may certify that I have experienced immediate relief in various complaints by the use of Dr. Thompson's medicine, particularly in the nervous headach, colic and ague. It has been very useful in my family for the diseases common to the climate. Many of my friends and acquaintances have made use of his medicine while boarding with me. Two cases of long standing I was witness to. The first was Mrs. Gidevan from the city of New-York. She told me that she had been attended to by thirty-four of the first physicians in that city, and that they had generally given her up to die of consumption. Having heard of Dr. Thompson, she came to Albany, and commenced taking his medicine. For the first ten or twelve days she appeared to improve, but was subject to violent fits. In the course of four weeks however, they were cured; and she

was enabled to return to New-York in better health than she had been for eight years before. The second case was that of a Mr. McDonald, from Cornwall, Upper Canada. His complaint was rheumatism in the head. He said he had been attended by four of the first physicians in Montreal, without experiencing the least relief from bleeding or blistering, the usual remedies in such a case. He then sought relief from the use of the waters of Saratoga Springs; but was not benefitted. He there met with a friend who advised him to repair to Albany and try Dr. Thomson's medicine. He used it, and was entirely relieved of his complaint in the short space of 13 days.

WILLIAM BISSELL.

No. 23 Pine-street.

The following certificate was written by Judge Dimmick, from the verbal testimony of Mr. Gladding.

ALBANY, March 12th, 1828.

This may certify, that I was three years ago taken with a pain in my stomach, and throwing up of my food, and general derangement of the organic system. I employed many Doctors, among whom were, Doctors Fay, Edson, Phelps, Danforth, Craig, Dubois, Burnham and Paige—all in the state of Vermont, where I then resided. They attended me through the summer and winter, in all about one year. I was then reduced so much I could set up but a few minutes at a time, and was given over to die by them all, excepting Dr. Dubois; but his medicine did me no good. My brother, in this city, heard of my situation, and came for me, that I might be placed under the care of the most distinguished doctor of this city. I was so weak and reduced, that I was brought all the way in my brother's arms. Doct. McN. attended me about five weeks. He said my whole system was disordered, and that there was no action in my stomach and bowels, and that my liver was very much decayed. At the expiration of that time, he told me I never should get well—accordingly left me to die. I was so much reduced that my backbone was plainly and distinctly felt by placing a hand on my bowels. I, by accident, heard of Dr. Thomson, as having effected great cures and

was anxious to have him called in; with much apparent reluctance on the part of my brother he was called in accordingly, and administered to me. And such was the effect of his medicine, which I declare in the most unequivocal terms, that in five and certainly not to exceed ten minutes, I felt quite comfortable and easy. I continued its use, and in one week's time I walked out without help, which I had not before done in six months. In six weeks I walked about a mile: and in three months I enjoyed better health than I had done in three years. Dr. M'N. then declared that Dr. Thomson had done more than he could do, and that no apothecary medicine could have any good effect upon me. I am now in good health, and am ready to state the above facts under any circumstances.

STEPHEN GLADDING

Boston, Nov. 4th, 1825.

Dear Sir—I received yours of the 28th of October. I send you, by mail, six Nos. of the Boston Patriot, containing six numbers of “AN ECCLECTIC.” They were written by Dr. W*****, one of our oldest and most eminent physicians, formerly lecturer on Materia Medica in the College at Cambridge. Though I am not at liberty to make use of his name publicly, you may use what I have said of him, omitting his name. Dr. I***** has published nothing about the practice, but has purchased a family right, and is very friendly to your father, and the cause.

From one of the Ecclectic alluded to in this letter, the following is an extract.

SAMUEL THOMSON tells us in the interesting narrative of his life, that his mind was bent from childhood on learning the medicinal properties of vegetables; that he was in the constant habit of tasting every plant he met; and having been blessed with a very retentive memory of impressions, he always recollected the taste of those he found, and remembered the use of such articles as were communicated to him by others. I was often told, says he, that I should poison myself; but I never could believe that the beasts of the field, to which the bountiful Creator has given instinctive discernment of wholesome food from poison, were wiser than

man, provided he lived agreeably to nature, and eschewed the luxuries of fashionable life. He tasted and well remembered the effects of the *emetic herb* (Lobelia) when but four or five years old; that he used to give some of the leaves or pods to his playmates, and laugh at its effects on them; but that he never contemplated seriously its extraordinary qualities before he was about twenty years of age, when he happened to give it, through sport, to a man who was mowing with him. The man chewed a sprig of it and recommenced his labour, but soon stopped and said, "you have poisoned me." He sweat, staggered, and imagined that he was dying. He trembled and had no more color of life than a corpse, and threw himself on the ground; but we helped him to a neighbouring spring, and gave him water to drink, when he vomited most profusely. After getting him into the house and on the bed, he, in a few hours, became composed, with no other alteration in his feelings than what arose from a most voracious appetite, which he freely indulged. It was this circumstance which gave me, says our Empiric, the first strong impression of the value of the pale blue flowered Lobelia as a medicine; for while I saw its powerful effects, I learned that it might be taken into the stomach with safety, and the idea of its singular virtues never left me from that day to this. I was now in the habit of gathering and preserving, at the proper season, all kinds of medicinal herbs, and varying my experience with them; some I found would have their operations reversed by boiling, as is the case with Lobelia, while some gave out their virtues to ardent spirits, others to a watery infusion, and so on; but I had not then any idea of ever devoting myself to practice medicine as a physician; for I had allowed a *doctor* to live in a house on my farm, with certain privileges, and to pay his rent in *doctoring* my family, which was an increasing one; but I found it a losing game, for whenever any of the family *took cold*, or were over fatigued, or eat too much, the *doctor* was called in, and never failed to give them physic, and sometimes to bleed them. It seems as a judgment upon me, that some one of my large family were sick most of the time the doctor lived on my farm, which was about *seven years*; for after he moved off I had very little sickness. I attended them myself, and when some were seriously sick, with such remarkable success, that my assistance was called

for by the neighbors, and the circle of applications widening, I concluded, at length to devote myself entirely to the study and practice of physic.

Born in a new and wilderness country, my advantages of education were very small, and my chances of knowing the world still less; blessed with a *natural gift* for examining the things of nature, my mind was left free and without any bias from books, to follow that inclination by inquiring into the meaning of the great variety of objects around me, and with the relationship and dependence of one thing upon another. I had read the Bible intently all my life, but could not find therein all I wanted. Possessing a body like other men, I was led to inquire into its component parts and peculiar nature.—I learnt that its natural elements were, like those of all other animals, *earth, water, air* and *FIRE*. I perceived that *heat*, or what the doctors now call “*CALORIC*,” was *life*, and *cold*, that is, the absence of heat, was *DEATH*; and that this *vital heat* was the primary agent in supporting existence and carrying on the growth of the body, and that the *stomach* was the fire place, and the food or medicine, the wood or fuel which kept the engine in play and carried us on through life, until the materials of it were, by its natural action or attrition, worn out, when it returns to earth, and enters again into the common stock of materials, to be made over again in a manner that is past finding out.

It appears that Thomson’s natural sagacity led him on to a general idea of the structure and economy of the human frame—of *digestion*, of the *use of the bile*—of the *circulation*—and to a confused notion of the glands, and of their secretions and excretion, and to a tolerable idea of the *nervous system*: in a word, to as correct a knowledge of the animal economy as commonly fell to the share of the country practitioners of that day. We find, however, that our *Empiric* had, like other physicians, his theories; for example, he conceived that there were in the stomach three combined powers to effectuate digestion, the first *heat*, the second an *acid*, and the third *bile*; that when the heat is deficient, the bile is defective in quantity and quality, leaving the *acid* predominating in the prime organ of digestion and vigor, giving rise, to what is vulgarly called *heart-burn*. Accordingly his method of radically curing this complaint is to raise the heat of the stomach by his lobelia, cayenne, and

other heating vegetables, which shall enable the biliary system to *brew* stronger bile, which by overcoming the predominating acid, shall carry on the process of digestion with ease and pleasure. While he uses those permanent stimulants, he abjures the use of ardent spirits; the first he compares to a steady coal fire, and the latter to the transient and dangerous blaze made by shavings. It is not probable that Samuel Thomson ever read the writing of *Galen*, yet it is remarkable that his doctrine of *heat* and of *cold* varies but little from that renowned physician; and it is also as remarkable that his belief in what *Hippocrates*, the Father of Physic, called *NATURE*, the curer of diseases, appears in all Thomson's theories. He differs, however, from the Grecian luminary of medicine, who waited for the crisis, or turn of a fever, whereas he tries, at once to keep nature in her salutary process, and by means that have startled the *uninitiated*. The first exhibition of all great and extraordinary improvements has always operated alarm on the mind of ignorance, as in the first cannon, first sky-rocket and first steam-boat. It is repetition that lessens fear, and adds to our stock of knowledge.

Thomson, like all other reformers, derides the general practice of the "*order*" or "*regular*" physicians, and carries the matter, in our opinion, too far. He denounces the use of *arsenic*, of *mercury*, of *antimony*, of *opium*, and of *nitre*; and considers *blistering* as useless, and the free use of the *lancet* destructive. He has a general aversion to the use of minerals, and to chemical preparations, and defends the idea that every region produces *vegetable* remedies for its epidemics. He seems to forget that opium is a vegetable production. He imagines that the *new Pharmacœpia* got up by the physicians of this country, with a *new set of names*, is but a scheme to continue the people in ignorance of the history of the medicine which the *Faculty* make them swallow. These wrong notions and prejudices are naturally accounted for in a man of Thomson's peculiar life and habits, who has gone on through our villages, for thirty years past, with his medicine in one hand, and his staff of defence in the other, often dexterously wielded against the interest and mortified pride of the "privileged order of practitioners."

AN ECCLETIC.

From the London Medical Adviser.

THE WHOLE ART OF PHYSIC.

A DIALOGUE.

Princess. In what then is it, that medicine consists?

Physician. In disencumbering—in keeping in proper order the fabric you cannot build.

Prin. Yet there are salutary things, and things pernicious.

Phy. You have hit upon the whole secret. Eat moderately of what you know by experience to agree with you—nothing can be wholesome that does not digest well. What is the physic that promotes digestion? Exercise. What is it that repairs the strength of the body? Sleep. What is it that alleviates incurable maladies? Patience. What shall mend a bad constitution? Nothing. In all violent cases, we have nothing but Moliere's receipt:—"Bleed and evacuate; and, if you please, *clysterum donare*." There is no fourth. The whole is nothing more than what I have told you—to keep the house clean.*

Prin. You do not surfeit me with your ware; however, you are an honest man, and if I am a queen, I will make you my first physician.

Phy. Let your first physician be nature—it is she who does the whole. You see, that of those who have survived an hundred years, none have been of the faculty. The king of France has already buried forty of his physicians.

Prin. Very true; and I hope to bury you, too. Farewell! Doctor.

Phy. BON JOUR to your highness!

[*Exeunt.*

*This observation is very true; but this very act of keeping the house clean, is not the most easy.—*Ed.*

